

Historic Building Appraisal
Lam Ancestral Hall
No. 13 Hang Ha Po, Lam Tsuen, Tai Po, N.T.

The Lam Ancestral Hall (林氏宗祠) in Hang Ha Po (坑下莆) of Lam Tsuen (林村) valley was originally constructed before 1906 when the Land Registry has its dating recorded, the earliest identified. It was built by the Lams, who are Hakka (客家), in this single-surname village to commemorate Lam Fai-ngok (林輝岳), the son of their founding ancestor. The Lams have their distant ancestors in Putian of Fujian province (福建莆田) who initially settled in Wong Chuk Yeung (黃竹洋) in Sha Tin and then moved to Hang Ha Po in Tai Po. Due to further expansion of their population, the Lams branched out to Kau Liu Ha (較寮下) in Lam Tsuen and Nam Wah Po (南華莆) in Tai Hang (泰亨) further north of Lam Tsuen. The ancestral hall was reconstructed in **2005-06**.

*Historical
Interest*

The ancestral hall is a Qing (清) vernacular design building having two halls with an open courtyard in between. Two raised platforms are on either side of its entrance supported by a system of granite columns and wooden brackets. At the Qing vernacular main hall is a colourful elegantly carved altar housing soul tablets of the ancestors with an offering table in front. The left bay of the hall has an altar on which a statue of the Kwun Yam (觀音) deity is worshipped. The open courtyard is sandwiched by two covered side chambers whilst the entrance hall is with a *dong chung* (擋中) behind the entrance. Internally the building is supported by columns and walls of green bricks which pitched roofs are of timber rafters, purlins and clay tiles. The ridge of the entrance hall is with a set of geometric moulding and its fascia board is highly decorated with carving of auspicious floral and treasure patterns. The side chambers at the courtyard have arabesque arched openings with moulded decorations.

*Architectural
Merit*

It is an ancestral hall in the Lam Tsuen area to witness its development.

Rarity

The ancestral hall has intangible heritage value. It was reconstructed in **mid-2000s**.

*Built Heritage
Value &
Authenticity*

The ancestral hall is used for ancestral worship. It was also used for Dim Dang (點燈) ritual held during the first half of the first lunar month in the Chinese New Year for new born male babies of previous year by lighting up lanterns. The ritual however has been discontinued. During the Chung Yeung Festival (重陽節) on the 9th day of the ninth lunar month, the Lams from the

*Social Value,
& Local
Interest*

three villages will go to have worship ritual for their ancestors in Wong Chuk Yeung village. The hall was used as a study hall for teaching village children but ceased to operate before the Second World War.

The ancestral hall and a family ancestral hall on the same row of village houses to its right are having related group value. *Group Value*

It is considered that the question of adaptive re-use does not arise at the present time. *Adaptive Re-use*